(d) whether any number of such courts have already been set up and the formal appointment of Presiding Officers made;

(e) whether Government propose to bring forward a legislation to give legal sanctity to these courts; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) The Hon'ble Supreme Court has no observations which may necessitate a review of the policy of setting up of Fast Track Courts.

(b) and (c) No. However, the Supreme Court has been kept informed about the scheme of Fast Track Courts.

(d) So far, 459 Fast Track Courts have been set up throughout the country. The appointment of Presiding Officers falls under the purview of the respective High Courts/State Governments.

(e) and (f) Fast Track Courts are normal courts governed by the normal law. No new legislation is necessary for giving legal sanctity to these courts.

Norms for sanctioning High Court Bench

857. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the State/Union Territories capital cities which do not have a High Court Bench;

(b) the norms followed for sanctioning High Court Bench;

(c) whether there is any proposal pending to establish a High Court Bench at Thiruvananthapuram; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Dehradoon, Gandhinagar, Raipur and Thiruvananthapuram are the state capitals in the country, where, at present, there is no High Court or its bench. None of the capitals of Union Territories except Delhi has a High Court or its bench located thereat.

(b) In its report, the Jaswant Singh Commission suggested the broad principles and criteria to be followed while deciding the question of expedienc and desirability of establishement of a Bench of a High Court away from the principal seat and the factors to be kept in view in selecting the venue of the said Bench. The report of the Commission was placed in the Parliament Library on 15.10.86 and was laid on the Table of the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha on 20.4.87 and 21.4.87 respectively, which may be referred to. The question of opening a High Court bench is considered by the Central Government in the light of these principles and criteria as and when a proposal is received from the State Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court.

Besides, the Supreme Court in its judgement dated 24th July, 2000 on a writ petition filed by the Federation of Bar Associations in Karnataka for establishment of a permanent Bench of the Karnataka High Court at any suitable place in northern Karnataka observed that the High Court is the best suited machinery to decide whether it is necessary and feasible to have a bench outside the principal seat of that High Court.

(c) and (d) No complete proposal has been received from Government of Kerala in consultation with the Chief Justice of Kerala High Court for establishing a bench of High Court at Thiruvananthapuram.

Vacancies of Judges in High Courts and Supreme Court

858. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of vacancies of Judges in various High Courts and the Supreme Court as on date; and

(b) the action Government have taken for filling these vacancies and also those vacancies which are due to arise in the next six months so that the vacancies may be filled on time?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) As on 25-7-2001, the